

Subject: CHRIS BENOIT! and SHINJIRO OHTANI! have themselves one of them scientific matches. YAMAKAWA! and MATSUNAGA! bleed a freakin bucket of blood. ITO! and HOTTA! beat the flying crap outta each other. And other stuff!

ALOHA~!

Welcome to DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #63!

HEY! It's been a Big Fat-Ass Christmas so I've been slightly lax on my tape viewing, but I did get a little viewing in, polishing off the rest of the last Glenn tape between Grandma-Intensive, Punkin-based activities, AND mackin ladysman Phil Schneider chipped in his exploding barbwire overview of the last half year That Was Big Japan. So get STOKED!

@#@@#@# NEW JAPAN TV 11/22/97 (taped 11/2 from the Fukuoka Dome)
-dhr!

Chris Benoit and Shinjiro Ohtani beating the paste and wrestling the HELL out of each other was offbeat fun. I've watched this match three times now (the first time was at the nCon II! WHIP ASS!!) and the more I watch it the more I iron out any problems I have with it. Benoit continues the tradition of suplexing and powerbombing just ALL the love out of Ohtani, and they steep this here momma in fantabulous psychology, with Benoit selling at a level I've never seen him sell at before. The pinnacle is Benoit trying to get feeling in his knee WHILE Ohtani has him in a reverse chinlock. Ohtani continues dropkicking his knee while Benoit goes all heavyweight on him by clotheslining, chopping and making with the powermoves- the pinnacle being a double German into a FatAss Dragon Suplex for two. Benoit does a toprope Backdrop Driver and goes into the Ohtani-Killer Powerbomb where Ohtani makes it to the ropes. There is enough time between this and the reverse of the superplex by Ohtani to make it a credible reversal thankfully, and Ohtani hits a WHOMP ASS Springboard Spinkick into a Dragon Suplex. This is offbeat because the first and second time I watched it, I thought Ohtani isn't selling well when he gets up and hits the finisher, but by the third time I start noticing the subterfuge of the early part of the match. Benoit sells the knee between gargantuan powermoves so it isn't the usual NJ Jr "My Highspots- Your Highspots- HEY! Let's call this a Finisher!" type of match. The early work of Ohtani on the leg of Benoit sets up the Superplex Reversal, which finishes off the matwork section where Ohtani ACTUALLY beats Benoit in this match. It's was real not Nj Jr to have it work out that way so I'd say this match was pretty great. It's was DEEP, baby.

Don Frye vs Kazuo Yamazaki was the next chapter in the New Japan story of Don Frye- who is to Stone Cold Steve Austin what Ed Gein was to Norman Bates. The Xenophobic overtones of this whole angle are WAY too much fun as the Big, Loutish American Bastard bites the ear of the beloved Yamazaki- just like some other American did somewhere. So between this stuff and All-Japan's big mono-syllabic Texans, I'm amazed that Japanese tourists ever come to our fair country. :) Don Frye was suitably dickish in this baby, pulling the ref onto him when Yamazaki gets him in a cross arm-breaker, not breaking the count, and, to top it off, he had the interview of the year afterwards. "Ogawa- I'm gonna beat the hell out of you. My submissions are ten times

stronger than yours. You are weak and you are a fool. I'm gonna beat the shit out of you." There you have it. I hope he beats the shit out of Ogawa. U-S-A! U-S-A!:)

Takaiwa and Kanemoto vs Tiger King and Liger would have been better if they would have worked over Grampa Sayama a bunch more. Liger was on in this one, as he was leaning into the ass-beating that Takiwa is supplying these days and then Liger would turn around and dole out the pummeling goodness as the time arose. Kanemoto was kinda quiet in this one- punking Sayama here and there. Liger reels off the SWANKEST top-rope Northern Lights bomb you'd ever wanna see and Takaiwa takes it like a KING.

ALL JAPAN WOMEN TV 11/22/97, taped sometime in October from Yokohama
-dhr!

Maekawa and Momoe Nakanishi vs Mita and the DIVINE Shimoda, 2 out of 3 falls for the belts is pretty freakin choice. Shimoda wears those tiny pants that say FIVE STARS in any match and she and Mita beat the holy shit out of Momoe Nakanishi. Momoe has a little breakthrough match here as she takes the king-sized ass-kicking and comes back strong, showing her fighting spirit and next-level high-flying arsenal and what have you. She does a double Chigusa blade-job and you can compare because they show the INSANE end of the Chigusa-Dump Matsumoto hair-vs-hair match at the beginning of the show. Momoe has to towel off between falls due to the bucket of blood. Maekawa is steadily improving, even if she is not overly stellar in this. I'll never buy her shooter shtickt but she is becoming a good worker and she did an admirable job in this as she swung big mo at a few points away from the Foxy Butt-kicking Vixens in HotPants who were mauling them. AJW used some nifty camera angles to capture the cooler aspects of the high-flying shenanigans of Momoe- the best being an over head cam that produced some nigh spectacular shots of the young upstart. Mita vandalize the youngsters all the way through as she has become the heel of heels- possibly surpassing the MudHoney-esque level of violence that UltraVixen Shimoda can muster. This was pretty BOSS and I wasn't expecting BOSS when I was going in.

Yumiko Hotta vs Kaoru Ito was all hurty, kicky and stuff. Hotta presents Ito with quite a vast array as Stiffer than Living Bejeezus kicks, punches and suplexes. Ito serves up her wacky brand of top-rope double-stomp action and throws in a CHOICE old-school tope just for kicks. Hotta hits the top rope spinning heel-kick that Yamada is always screwing up and KILLS ITO dead with two TRULY HIDEOUS Pyramid Powerbombs. Hotta can be anybody's trophy wife anyday.:0 WHOMP ASS! GET ALLLL THIS!

!@!@!@!@!@!@ PHAT ASS BIG JAPAN TAPE RETROSPECTIVE!
-Phil!

I may be the biggest Big Japan apologist on RSPW, I love Big Japan like Dean loves WAR. It will mix things that are really great with some things you just never wanted to see, along with bizzaro guest stars- although WAR's odd stars tend to be washed up WWF stars (John Tenta, Mr. Hughes, Doink, Typhoon ect.) while Big Japan brings out the seedy drunks and reprobates

from the scummy depths of American indies ("Hey! it's Dances with Dudley!" "Isn't that Ian Rotten? Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle, it's Bull Pain."). However Big Japan will deliver some real neat Lucha matches (Garbage leagues are the Far East home of Lucha Libre for some reason- Silver King hung out in IWA, and even W*ING had Shocker) and their Death matches- while not always good, they are at least something different- as opposed to the same old Onita death match which is damn near exactly the same no matter who he is wrestling. So this weekend I sat down and digested a big batch of Big Japan and here is the good, bad and ugly.

###6/19/96 - Commercial Tape

(Jason Knight and Bull Pain "wrestle" on this tape too so be afraid.)

Aquarius v. Dr. Wagner Jr.-

The gem of this tape. For some reason, Dr. Wagner Jr. stinks up the joint in Mexico but isn't afraid to rule in Japan. He had a good match with Takiawa in the Top of the Super Junior and he rocks the joint in this match. Wagner has an awesome half black, half white mask- which is a change from the all white he usually sports; Aquarius is quick as hell and hits a great tope-con-hilo and was a damn good Luchadore and I couldn't believe that Big Japan could have two guys this polished; but he takes his mask off at the end of the match and it's Tajiri so there you go.

Mr. Pogo v. Great Kojika-

Hey! Mr. Pogo and the fossilized Great Kojika. Kojika is dressed in like an old 30's gangster. For a crappy wrestler, he sure dresses funny. FF was made for this baby.

Shoji Nakamaki/Mitsuhiro Matsunaga v. Kendo Nagasaki/ Seiji Yamakawa (No Rope Barbed Wire Board Scaffold Street Fight Elimination Deathmatch)-

Not as totally insane as the scaffold match with the barbwire directly under it, but this was a precursor and the second best deathmatch in this bunch of tapes. Matsunaga and Nakamaki beat the shit out of Kendo and our boy Seiji. Kendo took some nice bumps in this match, so I guess he was trying to make up for being such a wussy in the exploding balloon thumbtack thingy. Yamakawa takes the brunt of the beating- including a double powerbomb that goes wrong in the kind of way that fuses spines. The match ends with a barbwire board being placed on two chairs (the thing between two chairs is a Big Japan deathmatch leitmotif), which Yamakawa gets slammed onto and Matsunaga then splashes him through it. Bloody and cool- with Matsunaga and Nakamaki playing cool heels, which is rare.

@@@June and July 1997 Samurai TV-

A bunch of undercard matches, the best being Zumbido v. Black Warrior. Zumbido I think is Mexican and he's pretty good, with a great moonsault and Black Warrior is one of the best damn luchadores on the planet so this is pretty beautiful- although it is too short. Chicago Express inexplicably shows up and he is SUCH the 783rd best wrestler in Mexico. Why the hell would you fly him all the way to Japan when you could get a Pandillaro or something? They have a guy who's little gimmick is to take a coffee break in the middle of his matches, a guy who kind of looks like Kuroda; Jedo, Gedo and Fuyuki, plus Pogo wrestles Kojika and Kojika's in blackface with an NWO t-shirt. I guess he was pretending to be Vincent. Or something.

Mitsuhiro Matsunaga v. Seiji Yamakawa (Fire Stones Deathmatch)-

Pretty disappointing considering the participants. These are the two best Death match guys they have, but this was pretty lackluster- with Matsunaga doing a Pogo imitation and no one taking really big bumps. Kind of okay but nothing great.

Shoji Nakamaki/Seiji Yamakawa v. Tarzan Goto/Mr. X (No Rope Barbed Wire Deathmatch)-

This was the best death match of them all. This was kind of a house show death match- as they just threw some barb wire, a windowpane and some thumbtacks out there; it wasn't all high concept like most Big Japan death matches. Goto was as fired up as I've seen him- opening up the fun by tossing the barbwire board at Yamakawa and everybody got all thumbtacked up, even Goto. Nakamaki goes through the glass and gets really bloody, Yamakawa finally wins a match by placing the board of thumbtacks between two chairs and pyramid powerbombing the unfortunate Mr. X right on it and it doesn't break and Mr. X has some thumbtacks jammed right through his non-descript mask. Nasty, bloody and Garbagy, worth a second look.

Yoshihiro Tajiri/Seiji Yamakawa v. Takashi Ishikawa/Kishin Kawabata-

This was for the tag belts and was a real wrestling match. Either Ishikawa or Kawabata looks and wrestles like a lumpier, crappier Akira Taue, and the other one is just a Japanese Indy heavyweight, and thus looks like he should be tending bar somewhere. Yamakawa is the king of the death match and Tajiri was last seen busting up Brian Christopher's mouth in the Whiff. The Taue clone hits a ring-apron-to-the-floor Nodowa, and they do a nice clothesline/powerbomb combo. Pretty good wrestling match with Yamakawa pretty much selling, and Tajiri unleashing his spectacular offense, including a TAKAtasic springboard plancha. Tajiri is the real deal. He is the shit and McMahon should bring him back and sign him- as he has as much potential as anyone in the biz. Yamakawa is just kind of there, but he does hit a mid range plancha.

\$\$\$9/30/96 Commercial Tape-

Dr. Wagner Jr. v. Tajiri-

Even better than the earlier match. Tajiri and Wagner do a bunch of really fast Lucha combos. Tajiri also busts out his awesome Asai moonsault. Bunch of cool near falls at the end. Great match.

Black Warrior v. Seiji Yamakawa-

Yamakawa shows he can sort of wrestle as he doesn't totally get smoked by the incomparable Black Warrior- even hitting a sort of good springboard plancha and winning with a nice spin into a backslide. Of course, Black Warrior is one of the best rudos in the world so he was probably holding Yamakawa's hand, but- Hell!- he still is the best actual wrestler in the deathmatch division of Big Japan because no way Matsunaga or Nakamaki has an actual wrestling match as good as this.

Shoji Nakamaki v. Mitsuhiro Matsunaga-

Neat Lighbulbish barbwire thingy. Matsunaga is not afraid to spend a long time setting something up as he breaks lightbulbs with a oil drum and sprinkles them on a couple of barbwire boards. Both guys take some nasty bumps with the highlights being Matsunaga getting suplexed through a barbwire board with broken glass on it, and Nakamaki getting facebusted on a similar board, which looked like it really jacked him up. Fun little deathmatch but no real rewind button bumps.

%%%Commercial Tape 11/20/96-

At the beginning of this tape Kojika is giving an interview and Heisei Ingiuien runs in. They brawl with the Big Japan gang and its loads of fun! Watch Goto and Nagasaki punch each other. Squint so it looks like a man fighting himself. Watch Koshinaka stand around and wonder what the hell he is doing in Big freakin Japan. Fun little angle.

Rocky Santana/Fantastik v. Yoshihiro Tajiri/Goku-

This match freaking rocked. Fantastik is someone I had never heard of or seen but he is a damn graceful luchadore- doing all kinds of flipping and spinning stuff that makes lucha so fun; and he also breaks out some pretty boss highspots, including a real nice tope con hilo . What Mexican hell is this guy stuck in and where can I get the tapes? Tajiri is Tajiri and rocks as is per usual, Goku is a young sort of green guy who is real good in an unpolished kind of way. He hits the asskickingist highspot of the tape by hitting a springboard rolling senton to the floor on the prone Fantastik and the way he hits looked like it sucked for all involved. Rocky Santana is the turd in the soup as he is shitty in a old luchadore kind of way doing nothing and doing it badly, looking and wrestling like an older, crappier Perro Aguayo (ain't that a scary thought). Another head scratching BJ import. The match still rocks though.

The Jester v. Satuora Shiga-

Shiga is not the emaciated AJ junior, but a guy who kind of looks like Kuroda. The Jester is dressed like a Jester and really, really sucks in the way only guys in Japanese garbage leagues with ridiculous outfits can suck. Don't get me started on the two jokers in the next match. Bleech!

Mitsuhiro Matsunaga v. Shoji Nakamaki-

This is a Cactus and Scorpions match, and there are cacti in the corners and a tank on scorpions in the middle of the ring. Big Japan ran a piranha match like this too and it sucked as much. There is nothing really compelling about watching guys try to push each other in an aquarium and when they go in you can't really see them get bitten (although a tank of rats would be a good idea). The cactus didn't even have really sharp quills. Weak, uninspired and not worth your time. Although that tag match is worth a look, the rest of this tape sucks.

%%%Commercial tape 4/1/97-

The first five matches on this tape where sort of a 5 on 5 series between Big Japans forgettable mediocre heavyweights, and some group of evil nondescript mediocre heavyweights. Hey! Kojika's dressed in a pancho and fatigues! What a nutty guy!

Yoshihiro Tajiri/Tadahiro Fujita v. Fantastik/Goku-

Tajiri is the best damn non-NJ, non-MPRO junior in Japan. Goku is a really good masked youngster who is going to be the bomb. Fantastik is the hidden great luchadore. Fujita is a skinny green junior who looks like he is going to be pretty good kind of a Shiga Jr. Fantastik brings the goods in this one too, hitting- in the space of a minute: a tope-con-hilo, rolling senton, and a tope-suicida. Goku has Fujita in a boston crap and Tajiri kicks him square in the face, which you have to love. Fujita attempts a tope suicida and gets his feet caught and lands on his head, so Tajiri has to finish the whole match, cause Fujita is all dead and stuff. Really good, Fantastik where art thou.

Yamakawa/Nakamaki v. Matsunaga/Goto-

This is a 500 volt Bug zapper barbwire match. Tarzan Scroto (catch the Scroto fever!) kills any goodwill I had for him by not taking a single freaking bump in this match, that fat candyass. If you're in a deathmatch, you DIE or you go home. Matsunaga takes a king-sized bump as he falls off the top rope on a bug zapper board which was placed between a chair and the ring apron, he bounces off it and lands on the floor. Yamakawa takes the big bump by getting powerbombed through a board placed between to chairs, which looked like it really hurt him. The evil sucky heavyweights jump all the guys at the end, setting up some big angle I don't have the intuition to figure out.

Big Japan is a very mixed bag, but if they keep bringing over Black Warrior, Zumbido, Dr. Wagner Jr. and Fantastik, stop sending over Chicago Express and Rocky Santana; develop Goku and keep Tajiri away from greener pastures, they will have a damn good juniors division, better than WAR's, IMO. And if they keep sucky old guys out of deathmatches and Yamakawa doesn't die, they will be ruling for a while.

%^%^%^ ALL JAPAN TV 11/23/97 (taped 11/23 from the Sendai Miyagi Sports Center-for those scoring at home)
-dhr!

(HEY! I wasn't afraid to give away the ending in this one, so if you are waiting for the tape to arrive and want the ending to remain secret, squint a whole lot while you read this or something.) This whole show was the ASS-STOMPING Mitsuhara Misawa and Jun Akiyama vs Kenta Kobashi and Johnny Ace HEADcrushAthon. Hey! Guess what! Mitsuhara Misawa is FUCKING GREAT! Yep. I kid you not. Freakin GREAT! He is SOO not afraid to subject himself to FIVE life-altering suplexes in this baby- the most horrendous being offered up by the owner of the Hottest Streak in Wrestling- Johnny Freakin Ace. His Cobra Clutch suplex REALLY makes me wince, not that Kobashi's Tiger Suplex 69 wasn't as painful as painful can look. The premise of the match is that Kobashi and Ace are just WASTING Misawa, beating the flying fudge out of him with every horrible All Japan dangerous highspot imaginable. BUT- drawing on the past and going to the next level of psychology and all that crap- Akiyama doesn't want to look like Kobashi looked when Kawada and Taue beat the piss out of Misawa in 95. So thusly (or something), Akiyama doesn't feign sportsmanship or honor or any of the other pansy-assed crap that did it in for Kobashi in 95, opting instead to just stand in the ring- not the legal man-

and beat the hell out of Ace until Misawa has the strength to kill Ace- dead! Kobashi is ALL THAT in this match, hitting truly hurty suplexes, bustin up Punkiyama like Punkiyama needs to be busted up, and generally being all large and Tick-like in an All Japan way. Ace does his highly superior AAAAAACCCCEEEE CCCCCRRRRRUSHEEEEEER and his magnificent FAAAACCCCEEEEEEE CRRRRUUUSSSSSHHHHEEEEEEEERRRRR, and all his stuff that has set him apart from the rest of the non-big four and the cool part is that it looked like Ace would EASILY have the win if it wasn't for the blatant extended interference from Akiyama. I mean, Misawa would get in a big shot between four or five Ace or Kobashi shots, but Misawa was selling "I'm-on-the-ropes" this night and when Misawa wants you to think he's out of it, you think that he is out of it (thus adding to the allure. It's kinda spooky if you think about it.) So they get Ace over further and make Ace and Kobashi look even more like an Ass-Stomping Tagteam, even though they don't actually go over, which is something you only get in All Japan on a regular basis. When is Taue/Kawada vs Ace/Kobashi?!?! Golly! It worked on me. AND Who is the new announcer? He is as psychotic as that guy who retired. Well, okay... almost.

NEXT WEEK: KANSAI vs OZAKI! HOSHIKAWA vs DICK TOGO! (post office willing) GAEA! GAEA! GAEA! TANAKA vs GLADIATOR! LUCHA LUCHA LIBRE! WHOMP ASS!

STRAIGHT AND STRONG~!

Dean Rasmussen, HoshikawaHEAD!

I fell for a girl. Became her boyfriend. I had her crying. With some romantic sounds. We couldn't just sit together. It always had to go further. It was a Cary Grant Movie.
-The Embarrassment. World's Greatest Band.